INTERMOUNTAIN STATION
Central Reference File
No. 0.73

Station Note No. 1. September 1, 1933.

U. S. Department of Agriculture - Forest Service

CENTRAL STATES FOREST EXPERIMENT STATION

Columbus, Ohio

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SEP 19 1933
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COLLECTION OF BLACK LOCUST SEED

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Local Seed Collection Urged. Black locust (Robinia pseudoacacia Linn.) occupies an important place in erosion control planting under the Emergency Conservation Work program. There are indications that the commercial supply of black locust seed is rapidly dwindling and many forest nurseries may be unable to purchase quantities sufficient for their needs. Instead of depending entirely upon European and outside sources, those in charge of forest nurseries are urged to gather at least part of their locust seed supply locally this fall. The use of planting stock from local seed is always preferable to taking a chance with foreign seed, and the use of ECW or other forest labor now provides excellent opportunities for seed collection. For those who have had little or no experience in gathering black locust seed, the following suggestions are offered.

Time of Collection. In the Central States black locust seed normally ripens early in September, although this year some seed was mature late in August. The pods should not be gathered before the seed has thoroughly matured and hardened. They may be collected until late in the fall or early winter, although as the ripened pods dry out on the tree they open and some seed is dropped from time to time. Therefore, early collection is desirable.

Choice of Seed Trees. Seed is no better than the parent tree. It is strongly urged that pods be collected from healthy, thrifty, well-formed trees. No seed should be collected from very young trees and from those under 18 - 20 feet in height. The experience of Dr. Hall has indicated that pods collected from the lower branches contain only about 40% as many viable seeds as those from the upper portions of the crown. Care should be taken to select trees bearing the current year's crop. Some trees retain the pods from the previous year, in which the seed is usually withered, moldy and infertile.

Method of Collection. Seed can be collected most economically where it is available on trees that have been felled immediately after the seed ripened. Where felled trees are not available, the pods must be gathered from standing trees.

With the use of a ladder a tree climber can hand-pick the pods growing near the trunk and on the lower limbs, but he is unable to collect those

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from the top of the tree and the outer branches with safety. A good collector can gather about a bushel of pods per day, which should yield from one to two pounds of seed. A sack of closely woven fabric slung across the climber's body by means of a stout cord provides a satisfactory pod container. Gauntlets help to protect his hands and wrists from thorns.

With the use of an ordinary long-handled tree-pruner, the climber can reach the pods much more readily and with greater safety. As he cuts the small bunches of pods from the outer and upper branches, a man on the ground gathers them and clips the pods into a basket with a pair of hand-pruning shears. In this manner two men are able to gather several bushels of pods in a day.

After collection, the pods should be stored in a cool, dry place until they can be threshed. Good ventilation of air and scattering the pods is necessary to prevent molding. A tight floor will prevent the loss of the seeds that escape from the pods during the period of storage.